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ABSTRACT

Beginning with a definition of open learning as flexible learning systems in which people study how, when, and where it suits them, this summary reports on activities of the Council of Educational Technology (CET) that are designed to promote open learning systems; explains different forms of open learning systems, such as flexistudy, learning by appointment, and correspondence studies; and describes the characteristics of open learning systems. The role of CET in the development of open learning in the United Kingdom (UK) is outlined, including exploring new opportunities for its application, providing help to institutions developing open learning arrangements, and providing information about open learning to those responsible for the development of education and training policies. Also described are CET's plans for future developments in open learning which will encourage the concept of negotiated learning, concentrating initially on learning exchanges, self-help groups, open learning in small companies, and the use of information technology to support this type of learning. Agencies interested in open learning are listed together with brief descriptions of their involvement and contact persons: the Open Learning Federation, the Further Education Staff College, NEC (National Extension College), MARIS (Materials and Resources Information Service), the Further Education Unit (FEU), the Scottish Council for Educational Technology (SCET), and the Open Tech Training and Support Unit (OTTSU). Publications which are available through CET and other resources are listed. (DJR)

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CET INFORMATION SHEET No.5

OPEN LEARNING

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Introduction

Open learning is a term used to describe flexible learning systems. Within an open learning system people study how, when and where it suits them as far as is possible. People should be able to:

- study at home or work, whenever convenient,
- enrol at any time,
- select from a range of courses,
- study without worrying about previous qualifications.

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Many potential learners have domestic and career commitments which make it difficult or impossible to attend conventional adult, or further education, courses. The range of courses offered in local institutions, or the way in which they are presented, may not meet their requirements. Simple administrative arrangements in the education and training system often effectively close learning opportunities to adults.

Open learning systems are designed to overcome these barriers.

There are several different forms of open learning system and new ones are developing all the time. For example:

- Flexistudy. This is a locally based scheme. Study at home with prepared material but meet at college for tutorials.
- Learning by appointment. This is a college based scheme. Study at the college at convenient times. Tutorial help is available as necessary.
- Distance learning schemes. Mainly correspondence study. Learners are in touch with an educational centre by correspondence and telephone. This may include face to face sessions.

Over 200 colleges have begun to experiment with more flexible learning systems and make arrangements more open. In these colleges, learning resource centres provide independent study materials, backed by tutorial advice. Some provide computer assisted and computer managed learning alongside the more usual texts, audio tapes and programmed learning packs. Students are able to control the pace and time of study, and often choose their method of study as well.

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What is special about these systems?

College based open learning systems should be characterised by...

a carefully worked out administrative system which supports tutors in their new roles, makes facilities such as labs available, ensures that the scheme is both monitored and publicised in the outside world;

a specially developed tutorial support service which provides pre-entry counselling, marking and feedback to learners, tutorials and seminars, and arrangements for assessment;

learning materials including texts, audio material, computer assisted learning programmes and practical kits for independent study. Some colleges develop their own learning material, but more often they buy it from correspondence colleges or other publishers.

What is CET's role?

The Council supports a programme of work designed to....

- develop thinking about open learning and explore new opportunities for its application
- provide practical help to education and training institutions wishing to develop open learning arrangements
- provide information and advice about open learning for government departments, local authorities and others responsible for the development of education and training policy.

CET has organised, and helped others to organise, training workshops for materials designers.

We have developed techniques for collaborative learning materials development to help institutions produce their own materials without having to face high capital outlay.

Guidance materials on how to write a distance learning course, and how to write self study material have been published (see publications listed on page 8). Material is being developed to help individuals write study guides.

We have developed learning material for OLS tutors designed for self-study and group study. "How to Tutor in an Open Learning Scheme" is based on experience gained from working open learning systems.

A change of direction

For the last four years CET's Open Learning Programme has been mainly concerned with the promotion of Open Learning in Further Education.

The main emphasis of the new CET Open Learning Programme (Phase IV) over the next few years will be on encouraging the development of Open Learning in less formal educational settings. Central to this work will be the concept of negotiated learning.

Negotiated learning is the logical outcome of any attempt to make learning more open and learner centred. In a learner centred system the emphasis is on learning (active) rather than being taught (passive). New technologies now make it possible for an individual to negotiate a unique learning programme in which the content of a course and the depth of coverage can both be negotiated between the learner and the person facilitating the learning.

The Open Learning Unit will be encouraging all aspects of negotiated learning and exploring different models. Our work will concentrate initially on:

1. Learning exchanges and self help groups

2. Open Learning in small companies

1. LEARNING EXCHANGES AND SELF HELP GROUPS

The Open Learning Unit will encourage the setting up of information centres which will promote learning exchanges and self help groups in their own localities. The centres will be based in existing institutions such as libraries, Citizens Advice Bureaux and community schools (to make them easily accessible to the public) and will hopefully become an integral part of the services offered by these institutions.

CET will be piloting A Guide to Self Help Groups before the end of March 1986. The guide deals with such questions as how to go about finding people with similar interests to your own, how to organise a group and how to find materials appropriate to the needs of your group. We will also be setting up workshops to disseminate and promote the guide.

2. OPEN LEARNING IN SMALL COMPANIES

Many small businesses still find it difficult to diagnose their training needs or indeed recognise that they have any need for training at all.

Those small companies who do seek help with training or professional updating often find that their local college - the traditional provider of courses - cannot cater for them because of administrative constraints. In most cases, for example, a college cannot run a course for less than twelve people. Yet this may be twice the size of the company concerned.

What can be done to change this?

Firstly we need to help managers assume responsibility for their own learning. A set of guidelines is needed to help company managers identify their training needs <u>for themselves</u> and evaluate the training opportunities on offer.

The guidelines would help those responsible for training:

a) to list company training needs and prepare specifications for training courses

b) to evaluate the training opportunities on offer

c) to identify the features of good courses

d) to match the stated objectives of training courses to their own specifications of their training needs.

Work has started on these guidelines which will be piloted in a series of workshops before the end of March 1984.

Information technology in open learning

The Open Learning Unit will be making use of information technology in various aspects of its work over the next few years. We will be exploring in particular the creation of data bases to facilitate learning exchanges, self-help groups and the setting up of information networks.

CET is also commissioning a series of regional workshops to demonstrate MAIL, a new computer assisted marking scheme developed by the National Extension College. For further information contact: Janet Bollen, NEC, 20 Forehill, Ely, Cambs, CB7 4AF.

CET is also able to support people who wish to set up training workshops in Information Technology. Contact Lee Wilcock at the CET Open Learning Unit for further details.

Other agencies interested in open learning

OPEN LEARNING FEDERATION

An Open Learning Federation was established in 1981 incorporating a large number of individuals and institutions involved in open learning. The Federation aims to:

- generate, foster and promote policy making on open learning systems
- co-ordinate and disseminate information through a variety of channels
- concern itself with the encouragement of standards and good practice
- help and advise in the training of tutors and counsellors through specially arranged workshops and conferences
- assist in the interchange of materials between individual colleges and groups of colleges.

The Federation publishes a newsletter four times per year which is available free of charge to members of the Federation. For further details contact: Terry Watts, Brockington College, Enderby, Leics.

THE FURTHER EDUCATION STAFF COLLEGE

The Further Education Staff College collects and disseminates information about all aspects of the management and administration of further education in the public sector. The Staff College maintains an Information Bank which publishes a wide range of papers. Details of Information Bank papers, Coombe Lodge reports and other publications are available from:

The Librarian
The Further Education Staff College
Coombe Lodge
Blagdon
Bristol BSI 6RG

Requests for information should in the first instance be directed to the Librarian. As far as it is able, the Staff College will respond to requests for advice and consultancy on any aspects of further education management including the management of open learning systems.

NEC (NATIONAL EXTENSION COLLEGE)

The National Extension College was originally established for the provision of correspondence courses. Co-operation with Barnet College in the development of tutorial support for correspondence students gave rise to Flexistudy. Recent initiatives have greatly increased the facilities available and NEC is now organised in three divisions; one deals with correspondence services and one with publishing activities. The third NEC division is its Open Learning Unit. This Unit exists to promote open learning activities of all kinds. The Unit offers the possibility of consultancy and advice on:

- open learning course design
- writing of materials
- selection of media
- application of new technologies in open learning
- training tutors and counsellors for open learning

Contact: Janet Bollen
NEC
20 Forehill
Ely
Cambs. CB7 4AF

MARIS

The Materials and Resources Information Service - MARIS - is a major project funded by the MSC Open Tech Programme and carried out by the NEC Open Learning Unit. MARIS is a computerised data base of open learning materials in areas related to the Open Tech's target users. The data to be held relates to materials which already

exist and might be immediately usable or which might be adapted. The service is available to any open learning provider; it is not limited to those operating under the Open Tech Programme. Contact:

Mike Taylor or Tony MacCormack
MARIS
Bank House
1 St. Mary Street
Ely
Cambs. CB7 4ER

FURTHER EDUCATION UNIT (FEU)

The Further Education Unit is an advisory, intelligence and development body for further education. It was established to make possible a more co-ordinated and cohesive approach to curriculum development in further education. It reviews the existing curriculum, determines priorities, carries out studies, curriculum experiments and evaluation, and disseminates FE curriculum information. The most likely avenues for support of open learning are through its PICKUP agency and its experimental colleges programme.

PICKUP (Professional, Industrial and Commercial Updating) is an initiative by the Department of Education and Science to stimulate the updating role of educational institutions in meeting the needs of business for post-experience education and training. FEU acts as a primary agent and runs a number of curriculum development projects, several of which involve elements of open learning.

Contact: Jenny Cox and Leslie Roylance
Room 7/1
Department of Education and Science
Elizabeth House
York Road
London SE1 7PH

FEU also conducts an experimental colleges programme through which a modest amount of support is provided for curriculum innovation. In support of this programme FEU has commissioned consultancy support.

Contact: Pat Noble
Room 5/73
Department of Education and Science
Elizabeth House
York Road
London SE1 7PH

SCOTTISH COUNCIL FOR EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY (SCET)

SCET runs the Open Learning Project which is funded by the Scottish Education Department. Its role is to promote and develop open learning in post compulsory education in Scotland and it can be used as a primary reference point for open learning developments in Scotland. Its main role is to provide information, publications, training and advise and consultancy on all aspects of OL developments.

The project is running the Scottish arm of MARIS - the database for locating open learning materials at management, technical and supervisory level.

Contact: Nigel Paine
SCET
Dowanhill
74 Victoria Crescent Road
Glasgow G12 9JN

SCET also supplies the secretariat for the new Scottish Committee on Open Learning (SCOL). For details of this please contact Peter Gartside at SCET.

SCOTSU - Scottish Support Unit for Open Tech Projects

Dr Gaye Manwaring
Dundee College of Education
Gardyne Road
Broughty Ferry
Dundee

Open Tech support project

An Open Tech Training and Support Unit (OTTSU) has been established within the CET Open Learning Unit. OTTSU is a service provided by the Council for Educational Technology on behalf of the Manpower Services Commission to assist Open Tech projects achieve their aims.

How can OTTSU help Open Tech Project Development?

OTTSU holds a Register of Consultants which includes individuals with practical experience in most aspects of the development, operation and marketing of Open Learning Systems. In consultation with project leaders OTTSU consultants design specifically tailored training and support activities to meet individual project needs and objectives. For example we can help:

- by establishing information, management and student feedback systems, including the use of computers
- by planning tutorial and student counselling systems
- by setting up learning materials development programmes
- by leading training programmes for Open Tech project staff in Open Learning techniques.

HOW DOES OTTSU WORK?

By contacting OTTSU arrangements can be made for a discussion of project proposals with OTTSU's lead Consultant. Following such discussions OTTSU's continually expanding Register of Consultants may be drawn upon to provide assistance in many ways, for example:

- consultation through single day visits
- 'attachment' of a Consultant to an Open Tech project team for up to 10 days in any one year in cases where advice on a longer term basis is necessary
- individually tailored training workshops in cases where particular skills are to be developed, e.g. in tutoring, counselling and learning material design.

For more information please contact: Dorothy Chase, OTTSU, CET Open Learning Unit, Rooms 24-27 Prudential Buildings, Above Bar St, Southampton, SO1 0FG. Telephone (0703) 36429/38368.

Publications

CET WILL SEND AN INVOICE FOR THE COST OF YOUR BOOK(S) PLUS POSTAGE AND PACKING. PLEASE DO NOT SEND MONEY WITH THIS ORDER.

THINKING ABOUT OPEN LEARNING

Doug Spencer, 1980, £6.50. A report based on visits to six colleges currently using open learning techniques: an authoritative account of existing practice which forms a basis on which to plan and evaluate other open learning schemes.

ALTERNATIVES TO CLASS TEACHING IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

Keith Davies, 1980, £12. Practical advice about the administrative, organisational, political and pedagogical problems of implementing alternatives to formal classroom teaching methods.

HOW TO WRITE A DISTANCE LEARNING COURSE: A SELF STUDY PACK FOR AUTHORS.

This publication is currently out of print. A new version will be available in the near future.

HOW TO WRITE SELF-STUDY MATERIALS

Roger Lewis, 1981, ISBN 0 86184 036 4 £5

A practical introduction to the tasks involved in writing open learning materials. The text provides a number of examples and a series of checklists for authors and editors. It provides an outline coverage of many but not all the topics covered in greater detail in "How to write a Distance Learning Course".

COSTING OPEN LEARNING IN FURTHER EDUCATION

Derek W Birch & Roger E Cuthbert, 1981, ISBN 0 86184 033 X

This monograph outlines the scope and limitations of costing in Education and outlines a method of determining the cost of a student. The method is applied to compare open learning costs with those of other attendance modes in three different types of open learning systems.

The unit will continue to publish papers from time to time on the various aspects of Open Learning Systems. Contact CET's Open Learning Unit in Southampton to find out what publications are currently available.

OPEN LEARNING PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE FROM COOMBE LODGE

Open Learning Systems in further education. Some aspects of resource management. Derek W Birch & J Latcham 1982, IBN 1611

This document discusses the provision of staff both academic and non academic in the support of open learning courses. The paper describes current practice in relation to fees and in costing open learning for the purposes of grouping and grading on Burnham formulae. The paper deals in with the course operation and distinguishes between this aspect and the effort required to provide learning materials.

Open Learning - a register of participating institutions. Jenny Monaco, 1983 IBN 1613

Revised draft of a list of participating institutions to indicate the facilities available at each.

Details of many other publications available from Coombe Lodge are contained in,

Open Learning an introductory reading list. J Latcham & P Rawlings, 1983, IBN 1614.

Available from The Librarian, The Further Education Staff College, Coombe Lodge, Blagdon, Bristol, BS18 6RG.

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Flexible Learning Opportunities. A report published by the Further Education Unit. ISBN 0 946469 35 0

Open Learning for Technicians. John Twining. Published by Stanley Thorne.

This book is the report made to MSC by Guildford Educational Services, looking at the feasibility of Open Learning for Technician-type courses

Learning at a distance - world perspective. Edited by J Daniel, M Stroud, J Thompson. Athabasca University, International Council for Correspondence Education.

A collection of papers from the ICCE Distance Learning Conference in Vancouver.

The 1983 Directory of Open Learning Opportunities in Scotland. Compiled jointly by SCET/SCOTBEC/SIAE/SCOTEC.

The 1983 guide lists over 190 courses in a wide range of subjects, offered by more than 40 different institutions in Scotland. Study may be wholly home based or may use college facilities.

OLS NEWS

OLS NEWS is a free termly newsletter which reports on developments and acts as an information exchange. It is sponsored by CET in co-operation with the Scottish Council for Educational Technology. Contributions are always welcome. They should be less than 400 words in length and include, where appropriate, a contact for further information.

Contact Lee Wilcock at the Southampton office or Carol Coleman at CET if you would like to go on the mailing list, or order a copy via Prestel - key *211439#

Further information

If you would like to know more about CET's involvement in Open Learning, please contact John Coffey or Lee Wilcock at the following at the following address.

CET Open Learning Unit
Rooms 24-27
Prudential Buildings
Above Bar Street
SOUTHAMPTON SO1 OPG

Tel: (0703) 36429 or 38368

or Carol Coleman at CET, London.

If you live in Scotland and are interested in Open Learning, contact:

Nigel Paine
Open Learning Project
Scottish Council for Educational Technology
Dowanhill
74 Victoria Crescent Road
Glasgow G12 9JN